United Nations E/ICEF/2001/5

Economic and Social Council

Distr.: General
5 December 2000

Original: English

For action

United Nations Children's Fund
Executive Board
First regular session 2001
22-26 and 29 January 2001
Item 3 of the provisional agenda*

Activities of the Joint Inspection Unit of relevance to UNICEF

Note by the secretariat

Summary

This document provides information on reports prepared by the Joint Inspection Unit during the period June 1999 through August 2000, which heretofore were not considered by the Executive Board, and presents the views of the UNICEF Executive Director on these matters.

* E/ICEF/2001/2.

00-77521 (E) 281200

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I. Introduction

1. The reports of the Joint Inspection Unit (JIU) are submitted to the executive heads of the organizations concerned, who then make their comments available to JIU and the relevant Executive Boards. The present document provides information on JIU reports issued from June 1999 through August 2000 that are considered relevant to the administration and management of UNICEF, together with comments regarding the conclusions and recommendations contained therein.

II. Reports submitted by the Joint Inspection Unit of direct interest to UNICEF

2. Since the issuance of the most recent UNICEF report to the Executive Board, in June 1999, on JIU reports of relevance to UNICEF (as contained in document E/ICEF/1999/4 (Part II)), JIU has issued seven reports, as well as one note, of direct interest to UNICEF.

A. Report of the Joint Inspection Unit on the review of the Administrative Committee on Coordination and its machinery (JIU/REP/99/1), and the comments of the Secretary-General and the Administrative Committee on Coordination on this report (A/54/288/Add.1)

3. This report provides a comprehensive overview of earlier reform initiatives of the Administrative Committee on Coordination (ACC), the functioning of ACC, and the interaction of ACC with the intergovernmental machinery. The recommendations are directed to ACC as an organizational entity, as well as to individual executive heads, as members of ACC. The study was completed at an opportune time and served to inform the current reform activities of ACC. The outcomes of this reform will be reported to the Economic and Social Council, in accordance with current practices of providing information on the work of ACC. In this regard, UNICEF has played an active role in the ad hoc high-level committees of ACC that reviewed the issues of administrative and programme coordination prior to consideration and action by the full ACC at the fall 2000 session.

4. With its newly designed Web site, UNICEF offers a direct link to the ACC Web site, which in turn is linked to that of the United Nations system. The UNICEF Web site contains information in English, French and Spanish.

5. UNICEF currently uses the "Report of the Executive Director (Part I): Annual report to the Economic and Social Council" to inform the Executive Board of key issues related to system-wide coordination and, in this regard, to actions taken and financial implications where they exist. This report is adapted and adjusted from year to year to provide more detailed information on specific issues. The Executive Director will continue this system of keeping the Board informed of the inter-agency coordination process.

B. An evaluation of the United Nations International Research and Training Institute for the Advancement of Women (JIU/REP/99/2), and the comments of the Secretary-General on this report (A/54/156/Add.1)

6. This study calls for the United Nations International Research and Training Institute for the Advancement of Women (INSTRAW) to seek closer relations with other research and training institutions of the United Nations system. The Executive Director has informed the Director of the Innocenti Research Centre of this recommendation and requested her to explore further with INSTRAW the possibility of complementary activities.

C. Report of the Joint Inspection Unit on results-based budgeting: the experience of United Nations system organizations (JIU/REP/99/3), and the comments of the Secretary-General on this report (A/54/287/Add.1)

7. UNICEF will follow up on the recommendations of this report within the context of the Consultative Committee on Administrative Questions (CCAQ), to which a recommendation for review is addressed.

8. In response to the Executive Board's request to adopt and develop a multi-year funding framework (MYFF) that conceptually integrates organizational priorities and major areas of action, resources, budget and outcome, UNICEF reported at its first regular session of 2000 on how it intends to further build on its established practice of results-focused programming and operations (E/ICEF/2000/5).

9. A four-year medium-term plan (MTP) for the period 1998-2001 is the current organization-wide planning document. The relevant medium-term reference document at the country-level is the multi-year country programme, which is developed in collaboration with the Government. Results-based budgeting carried out at the country level is part of the integrated monitoring and evaluation planning process, which analyses programme performance as an integral part of the country programme management plan.

10. The Executive Board has requested the secretariat to prepare a new results-oriented medium-term strategic plan for the period 2002 to 2005 (decision 2000/3, E/ICEF/2000/8 (Part I)). Member States have asked the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA) and UNICEF to harmonize, at the country level, programme cycles and support budgets. These are the building blocks of increasingly converging MYFFs, which emerge from a Common Country Assessment (CCA), which produces a shared United Nations Development Assistance Framework (UNDAF). Mutually supportive programming by objectives is creating the conditions for results-based management systems. These in turn allow for results-based budgeting as a programme tool to respond effectively to evolving country programme objectives, strategies and content.

D. Report of the Joint Inspection Unit on policies and practices in the use of services of private management consulting firms in the organization of the United Nations system (JIU/REP/99/7)

11. As noted in the report, UNICEF engages firms by using the same criteria as the United Nations and UNDP. UNICEF considers the use of management consulting firms beneficial, provided certain procedures are observed. When engaging consultants, UNICEF insists on persons with the appropriate skills, interviews them prior to their engagement, and is prepared to reject them if they are unsuited to the task at hand.

12. UNICEF has in place the policies, standards and procedures required to make the best use of consultants and consulting firms. The fact that staff learn from the expertise brought by outside firms has been, on balance, cost-effective.

E. Report of the Joint Inspection Unit on private sector involvement and cooperation with the United Nations system (JIU/REP/99/6)

13. UNICEF agrees with the overall recommendations made by JIU, and welcomes its analyses of the "rewarding yet complex relationship" of the private sector with the United Nations. The UNICEF Executive Director has cautioned against adopting a "limited and patronizing view" of what the private sector can bring to a relationship with the United Nations, and has asserted that the United Nations is not simply after private sector funding.

14. UNICEF has developed tools to guarantee transparency and accountability for dealing with the private sector and to avoid undue influence of special interests groups. UNICEF has a precise time-frame for the processing of requests for approval of projects and has issued a set of guidelines ("Building Alliances for Children"), which outlines, in detail, the principles and procedures for involvement of, and cooperation with, the private sector.

F. Report of the Joint Inspection Unit on the administration of justice at the United Nations (JIU/REP/2000/1), and the comments of the Secretary-General on this report (A/55/57/Add.1)

15. UNICEF welcomes this report, which offers a review of the United Nations administration of justice machinery, from its legal foundation to its function and impact. The report identifies six primary recommendations: (a) creation of an Office for the Settlement of Disputes and the Administration of

Justice; (b) creation of an ombudsperson function; (c) affording full powers to the United Nations Administrative Tribunal to order the rescinding of the decision contested or the specific performance of the obligation involved; (d) replacement of the present Joint Disciplinary Committee with a Committee for Professional Responsibility; (e) reviving the advisory function of the International Court of Justice; and (f) enhancing legal advice and representation for staff members.

16. These recommendations, while having system-wide impact, are addressed primarily to the Secretary-General as chief administrative officer of the United Nations, who has provided detailed comments in his report to the General Assembly (A/55/57/Add.1).

17. UNICEF has been part of ongoing efforts aimed at strengthening the system of administration of justice, and will continue to work closely with the Secretary-General and United Nations organizations in the pursuit of this important objective. In line with efforts to prevent and solve grievances at the earliest stage possible, UNICEF has had in place, for several years, an ombudsperson system designed to mediate disputes informally. Additionally, in 1999, UNICEF instituted an in-depth training programme in mediation skills for new ombudspersons, as well as human resources officers, at both headquarters and regional levels. Training in dispute prevention techniques is also available for managers. Such actions are in line with JIU recommendations for both the creation of an ombudsperson mechanism and the training of staff members involved in the administration of justice.

G. Report of the Joint Inspection Unit on senior-level appointments in the United Nations and its programmes and funds (JIU/REP/2000/3), and the comments of the Secretary-General on this report (A/55/423/Add.1)

18. UNICEF concurs with the need to secure the highest standards of efficiency, competence and integrity. The Executive Director shares the objectives, set out in the report, of ensuring that there is selection of the best qualified candidates; transparency of recruitment; a broad geographical distribution of senior-level posts; and the streamlining of relevant policies and procedures.

19. While most of the recommendations in this report are addressed to the Secretary-General and the General Assembly, recommendation 11 is addressed specifically to the executive heads of the United Nations funds and programmes, calling upon them to give greater importance to ensuring recruitment of staff at senior levels on as wide a geographic basis as possible (paragraph 111).

20. The Executive Director notes the publication of this report, with UNICEF figures based on the situation as of 30 June 1999. UNICEF continues to strive for filling senior vacancies, taking into account the desirability of the widest geographic distribution.

H. Handling of Joint Inspection Unit reports by UNICEF (JIU/NOTE/99/9)

21. Until recently, UNICEF had made all relevant JIU reports available to the Executive Board at its annual session. Reporting on actions taken and other issues directly relevant to UNICEF were contained in part II of the report of the Executive Director. Following discussions with the JIU secretariat in early 2000, and again in November 2000, it was decided that this reporting could be strengthened in a number of ways. The Executive Director will now, therefore, report to the Board at its first regular session, through a note by the secretariat, to be made available to Board members at the same time as the "Report of the Executive Director (Part I): Annual report to the Economic and Social Council". At its final draft stage, the note by the secretariat will be shared with JIU.

22. This current note is the first to use this format, which will provide a more visible annual presentation of the response of the Executive Director to specific reports of JIU. With this note, the Executive Director is informing the Board of all reports received in the previous year, of the views of the secretariat, and of specific actions taken. All JIU reports will be available to the Executive Board through the Optical Disc System (ODS) of the United Nations Secretariat, and will be posted on the JIU Web site, once it is established.

23. In reference to recommendation 1, current practice has been for the Deputy Executive Director, Internal Management, Administration and Finance, to act as focal point for relations between the UNICEF secretariat and JIU. This has entailed providing JIU

with suggestions for future reports, providing the initial contact with inspectors undertaking an assignment, arranging for appropriate meetings with UNICEF staff, making written submissions to JIU, receiving draft reports, providing comments on behalf of UNICEF, and ensuring that appropriate action is taken on final reports.

24. In accordance with recommendation 2, the procedure described above will be modified. The Executive Director will, in future, upon receipt of the first draft of a JIU report, indicate whether the report is relevant to UNICEF and, if not, why. The Executive Director will also ensure that comments address each relevant recommendation, including an indication whether there is any legislative action required.

25. In accordance with recommendation 3, the Executive Director will now submit JIU reports to the Board at the first regular session, as part of the agenda item dealing with the "Report of the Executive Director (Part I): Annual report to the Economic and Social Council". It is expected that the UNICEF Bureau and the pre-Board meeting will review and finalize the agenda and placement of issues under appropriate substantive agenda items. It is normal practice to consider the allocation of sufficient time for consideration of items and to allow for their appropriate introduction.

26. In accordance with recommendation 4, part I of the report of the Executive Director will contain a brief summary of the relevant JIU reports and, where appropriate, recommendations for action by the Board.

27. In accordance with recommendation 5, the Executive Director will inform the Executive Board of measures taken on the implementation of recommendations within her prerogative and of approved JIU recommendations, as part of the Report of the Executive Director or other existing documents, as appropriate. It is not intended to introduce a new agenda item.

III. Other activities of the Joint Inspection Unit

28. UNICEF looks forward to presenting its comments, as appropriate, on some or all of the following reviews and reports within the overall list of reports currently scheduled for completion in the next year, and having potential relevance to the work of UNICEF, at the first regular session of 2002 of the Executive Board:

(a) Planning, programming, budgeting, monitoring and evaluation in the United Nations system: learning from best practices;

(b) Report on support costs on programmes and activities financed from extra-budgetary resources;

(c) Comparative analysis of the management of junior professionals in the organizations of the United Nations system;

(d) Handling of oversight reports by legislative organs;

(e) Review of management and administration of the United Nations Office in Geneva;

(f) Management of buildings: case study of United Nations headquarters;

(g) Administration of justice in the organizations of the United Nations common system: options for higher recourse.

29. UNICEF has taken note of the preliminary overall listing of potential reports for 2001 and beyond, with the following expected to have relevance for UNICEF:

(a) United Nations revenue-producing activities (income generation and cost-recovery);

(b) Evaluation of the Joint United Nations Programme on HIV/AIDS;

(c) Successfully extending technical cooperation projects to the end beneficiaries;

(d) Effectiveness of the Performance Appraisal System in the United Nations system.

IV. Action required by the Executive Board

30. Issues raised in JIU reports relevant to UNICEF fall into two categories: those within the prerogatives of the Executive Director, and those to be brought to the attention of the Executive Board for action. Over the past five years, all recommendations made in JIU reports of relevance to UNICEF could be dealt with by the secretariat, since they fell within the purview of

responsibilities and accountability of the Executive Director.

31. UNICEF appreciates the ongoing dialogue with the JIU inspectors and Secretary. This interaction has been beneficial, and the outcome of this relationship has been regularly shared with the Board. This note constitutes a further step to facilitate this direct communication with the Board.

32. The Executive Director *recommends* that the Executive Board adopt the following draft decision:

The Executive Board,

1. *Takes note* of the "Report of the Executive Director (Part I): Annual report to the Economic and Social Council" (E/ICEF/2001/4);

2. *Expresses its appreciation* to the Joint Inspection Unit for its reports dealing with issues of relevance to the management and operations of UNICEF;

3. *Takes note* of the conclusions and recommendations contained within these reports and of the comments of the Executive Director thereon;

4. *Requests* the Executive Director to submit reports of the Joint Inspection Unit to the Executive Board at its first regular session, along with a brief summary of these reports and, where appropriate, recommendations for action by the Board, as part of the agenda item dealing with the Report of the Executive Director (Part I);

5. *Also requests* the Executive Director to inform the Executive Board of measures taken on the implementation of recommendations of the Joint Inspection Unit.